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Centers For Disease Control:

Gun Deaths Decrease Despite More Guns and Concealed-Carry Permits

This summer, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) released 1998 firearms mortality data. The results fly in the face of the myth that more guns make for a more dangerous society.

Total Firearms Fatalities

- In 1998, a time when the number of Americans owning guns and holding concealed-carry permits continued to rise, the rate of firearms deaths reached its lowest point in 20 years (11.3 per 100,000), and was 28 percent lower than its 1993 peak (15.6 per 100,000).
- Total firearms deaths also hit a 20-year low: 30,708, down 5 percent from 1997 (32,436) and down 22 percent from a 1993 peak (39,595).

Accidental Firearms Fatalities

- In 1998, there were 866 accidental firearm fatalities, a 13-percent drop from 1997 (992) and a 44-percent drop from 1993 (1,543).
- Just as accidental deaths have declined, so have accidental injuries. In 1997, the Centers for Disease Control reported, "Since 1950, unintentional fatal firearm-related injury rates have declined" (*MMWR*, p. 1030).

Children

- On average, 1.7 children up to the age of 14 died from gunshot wounds per day in 1998 (essentially unchanged from 1997). Meanwhile, an average of 8.7 teens aged 15-19 were killed daily by gunshot wounds, down 13.3 percent from 1997 — the largest decline of any age group. The report once again gives lie to the charge that guns kill 13 kids each day and shows adolescent gun deaths are on the decline.

- Auto accidents killed four times as many children as did firearms in 1998:

Automobile deaths, ages 0-14:	2,568
Drowning deaths, ages 0-14:	1,058
Suffocation deaths, ages 0-14:	968
Burning deaths, ages 0-14:	680
Firearms deaths, ages 0-14:	612

What Did — And *Didn't* — Cause This Decline

- The decline in gun deaths has coincided with a decline in the overall crime rate. John R. Lott, Jr., a research scholar at Yale University, has found that allowing law-abiding citizens to carry concealed firearms leads to lower rates of violent crime and that the number of concealed-carry permits issued is directly related to the reduction in crime.
- Accidents are down because responsible gun owners and organizations like the National Rifle Association are educating Americans about the safe use of guns — activities entirely ignored by anti-self-defense politicians in Washington.
- Both pro- and anti-self-defense researchers agree: The continuing decline in firearms deaths is not due to Brady background checks or waiting periods [see RPC paper, “‘Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act’ Does Not Prevent Handgun Violence,” 8/31/00].
- Nor is it due to greater enforcement of federal gun laws. From 1993 to 1999, the Clinton-Gore Administration prosecuted an average of 6,659 accused firearms offenders per year — a 13-percent drop from 1992 [see RPC paper, “Clinton, Gore & Reno Let 500,000 Likely Felons Pass Right Under Their Noses,” 6/19/00].

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Sources:

John R. Lott, Jr., *More Guns, Less Crime*, University of Chicago Press (Chicago: 2000).

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Sherry L. Murphy, “Deaths: Final Data for 1998,” *National Vital Statistics Reports*, Vol. 48, No. 11, (National Center for Health Statistics), July 24, 2000, [cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvs48_11.pdf.]

“Nonfatal and Fatal Firearm-Related Injuries — United States, 1993-1997,” *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)*, Vol. 48, No. 45, (Centers for Disease Control), November 19, 1999, [ftp.cdc.gov/pub/Publications/mmwr/wk/mm4845.pdf.]